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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the Parent-Caregiver Project, a research and demonstration program which focuses on the relationship between parents and caregivers in group day care settings. The project's purpose is two-fold: (1) to determine the nature of and identify variables that appear to influence parent-caregiver relationships in day care settings; and (2) to demonstrate effective day care practices that attempt to strengthen the relationship between parents and nonfamilial caregivers. The introduction sets forth the project's theoretical framework. Four areas of the parent-caregiver relationship serve as focal points of the research component of this project: (1) childrearing belief systems; (2) parent and caregiver attitudes toward one another; (3) communication channels' content, frequency and setting; and (4) center policies and practices toward parents. The goal of the demonstration component is to develop and demonstrate practices that improve the intersection of family and child care center social systems through a focus on communication between parents and caregivers. The steps to be taken in developing the demonstration program and the intended evaluation methods are discussed. (ED)

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THE PARENT-CAREGIVER PROJECT:

AN OVERVIEW

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Abstract

This paper describes the Parent-Caregiver Project, a research and demonstration program which focuses on the relationship between parents and caregivers in group day care settings. The Project's purpose is two-fold: (a) to determine the nature of, and identify variables that appear to influence, parent-caregiver relationships in day care settings; and (b) to demonstrate effective day care practices that attempt to strengthen the relationship between parents and nonfamilial caregivers. The Project has five interrelated objectives.

The Introduction section of the paper sets forth the Project's theoretical framework. It notes that the study of parent caregiver relationships is part of a larger issue that deals with the dynamics involved when a family extends beyond its kinship boundaries for needs traditionally met by members of the nuclear or extended family.

The paper's Research section describes the study's design, methodology and analyses, and provides a rationale for the selection of variables dealt with in the study. The variables fall into three categories: organizational, staff and parent.

The Demonstration Component section of the document proposes the steps to be undertaken in demonstrating day care practices that attempt to answer this question: How might a supportive relationship between home and child care center be established, maintained and nurtured?

THE PARENT-CAREGIVER PROJECT is a research and demonstration program that focuses on the relationship of parents and caregivers in group child care settings.

The Project's overall purpose is two-fold: (a) to determine the nature of, and identify variables that appear to influence, parent-caregiver relationships in day care settings; and (b) to demonstrate effective day care practices that attempt to strengthen the relationship between parents and nonfamilial caregivers. The Project has five interrelated objectives.

This document provides an overview of the Parent-Caregiver Project. It includes an introductory section and separate discussions of the research and demonstration components.

Douglas R. Powell, Ph. D.
Project Director

October, 1975

I. Introduction

An important issue related to the extensive use of out-of-home child care deals with the dynamics involved when a family shares its childrearing function with non-familial caregivers. Perceiving the family as a functioning social system inter-related with other social systems provides a context in which to study the relationships formed when a family transcends its kinship network for child care.

The young child who spends most of his day in a child care center is a participant in at least two major social systems -- the family and the child care center. These systems maintain their own norms and values, and serve as key socialization agents in the child's life. Each system has a potentially strong influence on shaping the child's behavior toward a desired cluster of values.

The ways in which these social systems interact is the focus of this paper and the overriding concern of the Parent-Caregiver Project. The following areas are of particular interest: What is the nature and quality of the relationship between the family and child care center? What factors influence the relationship between these social systems ? How might the way in which these systems interface be improved?

How, and under what conditions, the family and child care center relate to one another has implications for the behavior and development of the young child who must function in both settings. A key issue here focuses on the discontinuities and inconsistencies of the input of the socialization agents. Lippitt (1968) suggests that much of the efficacy of the socialization impact on the child of the various socialization agencies depends on the type of communication and coordination that takes place between

socialization agents and agencies. A lack of "horizontal collaboration" between socialization agents may cause for the child "problems of competitive demands for time, incompatible models of appropriate behavior, or inconsistent behavioral styles of intervention (p. 344)."

The child makes daily transitions between social systems and learns to cope with the array of messages that they emit. He or she is keenly sensitive to the degree of agreement or disagreement between socialization agents, and develops coping skills and behaviors to handle differences in expectations, pressures and needs imposed by self and members of the social systems. Lippitt has identified five patterns of problem solving adopted by young children in dealing with conflicting messages from socialization agents. They range from avoidance of the conflict ("compartmentalized loyalty") to a realization that responsibility for behavior lies with the self and that the self has a reciprocal relationship with socialization agents ("integration and reciprocal influence").

Research evidence gives further emphasis to the importance of examining the relationship between a child's socialization agents. Research data dealing with the importance of social attachment to a primary figure in early years suggest that the interpersonal dynamics of the triadic relationship of parent, nonfamilial caregiver(s) and child might have a significant influence on a child's social-emotional development (cf. Bowlby, 1969; Ainsworth, 1969; Maccoby and Masters, 1970). A preliminary pilot study by Fein (1975) indicates a possible relation between a day care center's practiced policy toward parent participation and a child's behaviors during the day

and reunion with the parent. In addition, longitudinal and intervention research data (Schaefer, 1972), which show that parents have great influence upon the behavior and development of their children, suggest that child care programs should recognize programmatically the importance of the parent-child relationship.

The dominant members of the family and child care center social systems are parents and caregivers[1]. The relationship between parents and caregivers reflects one of the major ways in which the two social systems intersect. More germane to the Parent-Caregiver Project, parents and caregivers are responsible for carrying out the "horizontal collaboration" between socialization agents that Lippitt believes leads to improved socialization processes. Parents and caregivers are in a position to coordinate the nature of the transitions and multiple messages with which a child must deal.

Perhaps the child care practices found in the kibbutz underscore the complex and delicate nature of the parent-child-caregiver triad, and provide an example of how one culture handles, in part, the interfacing of social systems concerned with childrearing. A strong belief within the kibbutz is that an optimal condition for a child's development is where the mother and the metapelet complement each other; the metapelet's relationships with parents should be "conflict free" at all times. Neubauer (1965) notes that for the child, "...how mother and metapelet interact, whether there is supplementation instead of substitution, complementation instead of conflict, will be more significant than any of the detailed arrangements that are part of the (collective childrearing) practice (p.111)."

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[1] Unless otherwise noted, the term "caregiver" includes day care workers, aides and center directors.

The issue with which this paper is concerned, then, may be addressed at several levels. Analyzed within a broad perspective, the problem focuses on the intersecting of social systems; this paper's specific concern is the intersection of family and child care center social systems. At a microscopic level, the issue deals with a major aspect of social system intersection -- the relationship of parents and caregivers. The Parent-Caregiver Project has been developed within a microscopic level of analysis. Utilizing the parent-caregiver relationship as a focal point, the Project seeks to provide answers to subareas of questions dealing with the interfacing of childrearing social systems: What is the nature and quality of the parent-caregiver relationship? How might the relationship be improved?

The parent-caregiver relationship may be characterized and analyzed in a number of ways. This Project has concern for the interpersonal quality of the relationship, making the assumption that the relationship between parents and caregivers is not necessarily strengthened through an increase in the amount of time the two parties spend together. Two other ways to analyze the relationship focus on traditional forms of parent involvement in day care programs, and the aims and practices of day care programs with respect to parents. Brief discussion of these latter approaches follows since it provides a partial framework for understanding the focus of the Parent-Caregiver Project.

The way in which parents are involved in child care programs provides one possible indication of the nature of the parent-caregiver relationship. The literature suggests that parents' relationships to day care programs are found at varying levels of involvement,

ranging from little contact between parents and center personnel to significant parental involvement in day care operations. Within the "active parent" realm, parents serve on day care advisory boards and councils, are involved as volunteers or paid aides, attend group parent meetings and individual parent conferences, and serve as learners of effective childrearing practices (Chapman and Lazar, 1971; Honig, 1975).

Data suggest that there is a relationship between day care sponsorship and the nature of parental involvement. One survey (Westinghouse-Westat study, 1970) indicates that representation on decision-making boards is far greater in federally-funded centers than in other centers. Frost and Schneider (1971) report in a study of parental roles in day care programs under five types of sponsorship, that parents in private non-profit day care usually represent an elected majority on the boards of their programs, but their role in program administration is more of an advisory one and less of a shared responsibility with day care administrators. Data from this study indicate that parents in Project Head Start and other public-supported day care programs seem to have considerable formal power, whereas day care programs connected with public schools give less formal power and decision-making responsibilities to parents. In private profit-oriented programs there appears to be little parent involvement.

Day care program aims and practices toward parents provide a second way to analyze the parent-caregiver relationship. In a discussion of parental involvement in compensatory education programs, Gordon (1969) claims that most parental involvement is aimed at changing the value system and behavior of the parent. He states that the bulk of parental

participation is patronizing rather than designed to provide support and skills to assist parents in the childrearing role. There are indications that the patronizing approach to parents found in compensatory education programs also prevails in day care practices. A recent report by the Day Care Consultation Service of Bank Street College of Education claims that most day care staff members are concerned "almost entirely on what goes on in the center and the classroom, not on the total family, and not on creating meaningful dialogue between the program and the family (p. 3)." Another report published by the Day Care and Child Development Council of America (1970) states that "many centers have no parent participation whatsoever. Parents are regarded as 'consumers' of a product. In some cases, the child and his parents are thought to be the product itself! (p. 64)."

In discussing these two approaches to analyzing the parent-caregiver relationship, it is important to note several findings of a recent comprehensive literature review. First, it appears that generally the parent-caregiver relationship has been conceptualized in terms of traditional forms of parent involvement; the literature demonstrates that there is great concern for parent involvement at policy-making levels and in conventional mechanisms such as parent meetings. There are numerous accusations about the lack of parent involvement in day care programs; two representative statements are presented in the previous paragraph. Secondly, existing research data dealing with parent-caregiver relationships in group child care settings are limited and limiting. The bulk of what is known about parent-caregiver relationships in group child-care settings emanates from intervention programs where parental involvement is mandatory or an integral

part of the intervention design. Thus, these data may not be germane to day care programs for children of parents who seek child care services due to work schedules or other life-style reasons. While it is valuable to know that there is parental representation on day care decision-making boards, it is not clear what impact, if any, this representation has on the child care program, or parents (families) involved. Data are available dealing with parental involvement in Head Start, yet here the tendency is to deal with the number of positions and frequency of attendance at meetings. In addition, many of these data may not be applicable to day care programs since it is likely that the very nature of the relationship of the parent to the day care setting is different from the Head Start situation (Chapman and Lazar, 1971).

A third approach to the parent-caregiver relationship has concern for the interpersonal dynamics of the dyad. This approach recognizes that parents and caregivers represent social systems that influence the child's life, and gives emphasis to values, role expectations and communication channels found among parents and caregivers. There are multiple needs for systematic data related to this approach to parent-caregiver relationships. There is a need to distinguish interpersonal dynamics of parent-caregiver relationships, and to identify factors that appear to influence these relationships. There is a need to know the norms, expectations, roles, attitudes and communication patterns found among parents and child care providers. There is a need to know the degree to which day care program policies and practices enchance the parent-child relationship, and how parents and caregivers perceive the family's and day care center's roles in the child's life. Without these data it is not possible to approach substantively

a relationship that appears to have a significant influence on a child's behavior and development.

There seems to be increasing concern for day care programs to give considerably more attention to the parent-child relationship than has been done in the past. Hess, et al. (1971) urge day care staff members to work closely with parents so that extra-familial care can incorporate some of the individuality of each parent-child pair. Bronfenbrenner (1972) submits that day care programs can have "no lasting constructi impact" on the development of the child unless they include the people who constitute t day-to-day environment. He calls for parents to play a prominent role in the planning administration and execution of day care programs. In the area of training, competen for the Child Development Associate, developed by the U. S. Office of Child Developm require child care workers to bring about optimal coordination of home and center childrearing practices and expectations. Among other parent-child competencies, the Child Development Associate is to incorporate elements of the child's cultural back-ground into the day care program, communicate with parents about their child's life inside and outside the center, discuss with parents their values for their child, and utilize the strengths and talents of parents in the development of their children.

Despite these indications, there appears to be a lack of information on how parent-caregiver relationships may be used to enhance the parental role in the design of day care programs. A report which reviews research needs in day care concludes, among other matters, that there is a need to learn effective ways to involve parents in day care programs (Chapman and Lazar, 1971). An examination of educational materials

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sensitive to the parent-child relationship; (c) to implement the program practices in selected day care centers; (d) to evaluate the program development and implementation process and the effectiveness of the program practices; and (e) to develop, evaluate and disseminate materials on parent-child-caregiver relationships for pre- and in-service education of child care professionals.

The Project is divided into Research and Demonstration components. Both components are discussed in this document. The first objective is to be carried out as part of the Research Component. The next three objectives (b, c and d) are related to the Demonstration Component. The last objective (e) is to be an outgrowth of the Demonstration Component and is not discussed at length in this paper.

During the development of plans for the Parent-Caregiver Project, a number of decisions were made that shaped the focus of the Project's objectives and the way in which the Project is to be carried out. These decisions, briefly presented below, provide a context in which the parent-caregiver relationship is approached in this Project.

First, the study of parent-caregiver relationships is viewed as part of a larger issue that deals with the dynamics and processes involved when a family unit (or member) extends beyond its own resources and kinship boundaries for needs traditionally met by members of the nuclear or extended family. The need that is of interest to this Project, of course, is child care. A study by Emlen, Donoghue and LaForge (1971) provides significant insight into the parent-caregiver relationship found in family day care settings, and yet we know little about the parent-caregiver dynamics related to group child care.

Second, this Project focuses on specific aspects of the parent-caregiver relationship and studies only parents and caregivers. As noted in the following section, the Project's Research Component is an initial step toward subsequent in-depth study of parents and caregivers. The Project focuses on the adult members of the aforementioned parent-child-caregiver triadic relationship. Although the Project's theoretical base stems from a concern for how the parent-caregiver relationship affects a child's development and behavior, this Project is not a child development study. Rather, it pursues a social psychological orientation to the study of the relationship of significant persons in a young child's life.

A third decision affecting the nature of the Project deals with the type of out-of-home group day care setting with which the Project is to be concerned. The Project developers selected medium-sized day care centers where parents are not involved in any significant way as volunteers or aides (excluding parent cooperatives and Head Start programs) or students of effective parent-child interaction (excluding early intervention programs). The concern is for parent-caregiver relationships found in day care centers used by parents whose child care needs are caused largely by work or school activities. A subcomponent of this third decision calls for the Project to study parents and caregivers and to implement the day care practices in naturalistic settings.

Fourth, a decision was made about the relationship of day care centers to the family unit desired by this Project. The decision has implications for the Demonstration Component of this Project, not the Research Component. Philosophically the Demonstration

Component is rooted in the belief that day care programs should provide a childrearing support system for families that respects and is sensitive to parental values and uniquenesses of parent-child relationships, and acts as a partner with the parent in the childrearing function. This position reflects an acceptance of the research evidence which points to the importance of parent-child relationships, and a realization that the family unit, with a multitude of forces working against it in American society, is in need of support. Implementation of this philosophical position requires a possible alteration of day care center practices, which potentially necessitates a change in caregiver attitudes and behaviors. Thus, within the Project's focus on parent-caregiver relationships, the emphasis is on caregivers and center policies and practices that relates to parents.

A fifth decision calls for a clear distinction between parental involvement in day care programs and efforts to strengthen the parent-caregiver relationship. The contention here is that a quantitative increase in the amount of time a parent spends in a day care center does not necessarily yield a closer relationship between parent and caregiver. Thus, the Project's Demonstration Component does not seek to increase traditional parental involvement in child care programs, but is concerned with the quality of the parent-caregiver relationship and desires to increase parental input and caregiver sensitivity to parents and the parent-child relationship. Likewise, the Project's Research Component is not designed to measure conventional forms of parental involvement, but seeks to determine parent-caregiver attitudes and interactions, and factors that appear to influence the relationship.

II. Research Component

There are two distinct albeit related segments within the Project's Research Component. The first seeks to characterize the nature of parent-caregiver relationships in group child care; the second desires to measure the effectiveness of the Project's Demonstration Component. The first segment will be discussed in some detail in this section while the evaluation of the demonstration practices will be treated in the Demonstration Component section.

It is important to emphasize the scope of the research study associated with the Parent-Caregiver Project. The research should be perceived as preliminary to further in-depth examination of selected variables and parent-caregiver relationships. Foremost in the present study's research design is an attempt to uncover the dynamics and attendant variables of parent-caregiver relationships; study of cause-effect relationships is not intended and should not be inferred in an interpretation of the study's findings. The thrust of this study is to determine how and under what conditions do parents and caregivers relate in group day care. It is believed that this type of an initial study is a necessary antecedent to further longitudinal investigation of causal relationships.

The study of parent-caregiver relationships is viewed as a multifaceted phenomenon that requires a series of separate yet interdependent investigations, beginning with a preliminary study to uncover dynamics of the relationship and identify significant variables, and continuing with in-depth study of cause-effect relationships. The

preliminary, foundation study is discussed herein.

The present research study has several purposes. First, it seeks to provide necessary research evidence for the activities proposed in the Demonstration Component. Second, it should yield a preliminary understanding of the dynamics involved in the parent-caregiver relationship, particularly the attitudinal dimensions. Third, data from this study should be useful in developing a framework for subsequent study of the parent-caregiver relationship. Further study might take several forms. For example, it might be appropriate to study longitudinally parent-caregiver dyads and monitor changes in behaviors and attitudes. Another potentially important study would be a participant-observation examination of day care centers with close attention to behaviors and practices toward parents. In this type of study the center might be conceptualized as a social system. A third possible study might be an examination of the effect of caregiver training and perceptions of role function on caregiver behaviors toward parents. This study would be particularly valuable if data from the preliminary study suggest a strong relationship between caregiver characteristics and attitudes toward interactions with parents. These study areas are mere suggestions, of course. Determination of the type of subsequent investigation is dependent upon an analysis of the present study's findings.

There are many dimensions of the parent-caregiver relationship and a number of ways in which the relationship may be studied. Three facets of the relationship serve as focal points of the present study: attitudes, communication and center practices toward parents. It is hypothesized that a number of variables potentially affect

parent-caregiver communication and center practices. These factors are related to staff, parent, and center characteristics, and the study is designed to examine attitudes, communication and center practices in relation to these variables.

This study gives emphasis to the attitudinal dimension of the parent-caregiver relationship. The reason for this emphasis stems, in part, from the common claim that the reason parents and caregivers oftentimes fail to have close relationships is because caregivers believe parents are not interested in their child's activities at the day care center ("They never come to meetings") and parents think caregivers hold all wisdom about child development ("Afterall, she's the teacher, not me"). The emphasis on attitudes also reflects research evidence which shows a relationship between teacher belief systems and preschool environments (i.e. Harvey, White, Prather, Alter and Hoffmeister, 1966). Lastly, the attitudinal emphasis indicates an interest in how childrearing belief system congruency or discrepancy among parents and caregivers might influence the parent-caregiver relationship. Consider, for example, what effect, if any, a discrepancy over how an adult should handle a childrearing matter such as a child's sexual play (a discrepancy found by Prescott, 1965 in her study of goals and discipline methods of parents and teachers in day care) might have on the parent-caregiver relationship.

Thus, a contention of this research study is that attitudes play a significant role in determining the nature of parent-caregiver interaction. This is not to say that attitudes necessarily predict behavior, but it is to submit that they are among a number of factors (i.e. situational determinants) that affect human behavior and interaction. (The issue

of attitudes and behavior is given further treatment in the theoretical workscope discussion of the Demonstration Component section.)

The study's focus is not limited to attitudes, however. There is concern for parent-caregiver communication and center practices toward parents. The study considers the following dimensions of communication: frequency, setting, content and channel(s). Center practices to be examined include attempts to increase center communication with parents (i.e. parent conferences and meetings, use of bulletin boards and notes).

The study desires to interface attitudes with communication data and center practices, and therefore the attitudinal data are to be treated in two ways. First, attitudes are to be analyzed in relation to selected variables, thus yielding an examination of the relationship of attitudinal data to staff, parent and center characteristics. Second, attitudinal data are to be analyzed as variables affecting parent-caregiver communication and center practices toward parents.

Research Design.

The aim of the research study is to (a) determine the nature of parent-caregiver relationships in diverse group child care settings by examining attitudes, communication levels, and center practices toward parents, and (b) identify variables that appear to have a significant influence on attitudes and communication levels of parents and caregivers, and on center practices toward parents.

To determine the nature of parent-caregiver relationships, the following areas are to be studied: (a) preferred childrearing behaviors (childrearing belief systems),

(b) parent and caregiver attitudes toward one another, and (c) communication channels, content, frequency and setting. A fourth area to be studied includes center practices toward parents. These areas are discussed in the subsection titled Research Areas.

In addition to attitudes, the research design considers the influence of eight interacting variables. The variables may be categorized into three interrelated areas: organizational characteristics, staff characteristics and parent characteristics. Discussion of the variables and the rationale for their selection follows.

Organizational Variables. This study recognizes three variables that are related to the organizational dimension of a day care center. One (center size) is controlled, while the influence of two other variables is considered. They are center sponsorship and evidences of cohesive informal or formal social network that links parents and caregivers on matters other than those directly related to the child care center.

The sponsorship variable to be dealt with in this study stems from an interest in the idea that different sponsorship arrangements reflect different institutional motivations and value systems. For example, are there significant variations in center policies and practices toward parents when comparing private profit-oriented centers with non-profit centers? The inclusion of the sponsorship variable also represents an attempt to transcend the Frost and Schneider (1971) data reported earlier by looking at intra-center factors such as attitudes and communication channels and messages associated with parent-caregiver interactions. While Frost and Schneider found a

relationship between center sponsorship and traditional parent participation, it is not clear if sponsorship has an effect on the interpersonal dynamics of parent-caregiver relationships. Prescott et al. (1967) found little relationship between center sponsorship and teacher behaviors, but this study focused on behaviors within centers and not on behaviors with external elements. Thus, the Frost and Schneider sponsorship finding appears significant enough to warrant further investigation.

The desire to identify evidences of a cohesive social network of parents and caregivers reflects an interest in parent-caregiver relationships outside the confines of the child care center and the effect, if any, this social network has on the relationship of parents and caregivers. The interest here is in indications of a social network of parents and nonfamilial adults who have assumed roles traditionally held by family members. While there has been little research in this area, the study of how families interact with external persons and institutions is an important topic (see Bott, 1957), particularly when families go beyond kin relationships to meet their child care needs.

There is some evidence that social networks surrounding child care settings have an impact on parent-caregiver relationships. A recent report of the Bank Street Day Care Consultation Service notes that "successful natural (helping) systems" are a key characteristic of family-centered child care centers where there is considerable parent-caregiver interaction. Centers with what the report calls "natural systems" provide more than child care. They serve as a human support system for family needs and crises; parents and caregivers interact and act on issues and problems other than those directly related to child care. The Day Care Consultation Service

report states that in centers of this type, there is a feeling of "caring, stability, warmth, and intimacy." The Bank Street observation about natural helping systems and parental involvement in day care centers is not empirically documented, and thus is a probe of the present study.

Clearly an organizational or center characteristic is the socioeconomic status of its clientele. The study accounts for this factor in its design; the income and education level of parents is discussed later as a parent variable.

Staff Variables. Findings of an extensive study of day care centers by Prescott et al. (1967) served as a basis for the selection of the staff variables considered in this study. The variables are caregiver and center director characteristics, caregivers' concept of role, and center director's concept of the center's relationship with parents.

The relation of teacher personality and characteristics to teacher behavior has been documented by a number of research studies (for review, see Getzels and Jackson, 1963), and accordingly Prescott et al. (1967) found that day care teacher characteristics are related to variations in teacher attitudes and performance. The parent-caregiver study will gather data in two areas: number of years and type of previous experience in working with young children (day care center, elementary school, babysitter, caring for own children or grandchildren, Sunday school teacher, etc.) and formal educational preparation to work with young children. Probes related to this last area are to be based on a modification of categories developed and utilized by Prescott (1964, 1965) and Prescott et al. (1967). These include: no child care

training, attendance at workshops, college or university course work, and a degree (associate, bachelors or above) in child development or related field.

The study is designed to examine the possible influence of caregivers' role concept on attitudes and interaction levels. The interest in this variable stems from the study by Prescott et al. (1967) which found teacher's role concept to be related to teacher behaviors. The parent-caregiver study will base caregivers' concept of role on the respondents' expressed hope for children's experiences in the day care center (adapted from Prescott et al., 1967). Role concepts will be placed in the following three areas, as determined by Prescott (1964, 1965): custodial (emphasis on physical aspects of care), adult-centered (teaching children behavior valued by adults), and child-centered (emphasis on self-initiated activities of children).

The study has concern for center director's administrative behaviors as they relate to parents. The assumption is that directors have considerable power and influence (which may be the result of sponsorship, governing board and/or other variables) in establishing the center's environment toward parents (i.e. caregivers' behaviors). The interest of the present study is in learning of the degree to which the director values parent-center communication, the director's perceptions of what the parent-caregiver relationship ought to be, and the director's perceptions of her role in maintaining center relations with parents. While the study will not look specifically at the leadership style the director utilizes to implement her beliefs about parents, it will examine the belief system in relation to center practices and caregiver attitudes and interactions.

Parent Variables. Three variables related to parents are concerns of the study. They are: the income and education of parents, length of time of parent association with center, and parents' previous experience with group child care.

The selection of the income-education variable is based in part on the suggestions of research evidence. There are a number of studies which deal with childrearing practices preferred by members of different social classes (for a review, see Fein and Clarke-Stewart, 1973). Most research in this area is limited, focusing on parental control within the context of a restriction-versus-permissiveness dichotomy and neglecting to analyze in depth specific child control techniques used by parents. Data suggest that children from lower class homes are accustomed to more power-oriented control, physical punishment and restriction than middle class children where generally there is a permissive, "soft" disciplinary environment. These descriptions of general parent control methods imply the types of respective day care environments which low- and middle-class children might find to be consistent with their home environment, and the types of day care that parents might prefer for their children. Whether day care programs should respond to the expectations of parents is a philosophical question; the interest here is in (a) examining parental preference for childrearing in light of existing research data, and (b) the degree to which parents and caregivers share similar childrearing beliefs.

A second variable is the length of time parents have a child (children) in the participating center. To ascertain whether length of parent association with center

appears to have an effect on parent-caregiver variables, the research study will analyze factors associated with two categories of parents: those with six months or less of continuous association with the center and those with more than six months of affiliation. This analysis is dependent upon obtaining an adequate number of parent responses in each category. The study does not directly control for this variable, although the gathering of data during two separate blocks of time hopefully will yield a sufficient sample.

A third variable focuses on parents' previous experience with group child care. Again factors will be analyzed for two categories of parents: those who have had younger children in day care centers, and those whose first child presently is in the participating center.

Group child care does not lend itself to a clear-cut, three-member parent-child-caregiver triad as discussed in the introductory pages of this document. The relationship entails considerably more people, resulting in a home-child-center triad where the dominant members are parents and nonfamilial caregivers. Because group child care does not enable an identification of formal triadic relationships, the research stu is concerned primarily with parents and caregivers in given day care center settings rather than with specific parent-caregiver dyads. In the study parents are considered collectively and caregivers are considered collectively.

Twelve centers will comprise the data base in the research study. Participating centers must meet the following criteria: (a) centers must operate a full-day program with the majority of children enrolled at least five hours per day five days per week;

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with twelve child care centers (three for each center type) located in the Detroit metropolitan area will participate in the study.

Overall the study will include a multiracial population. Where possible only multiracial centers will be selected. The number of diverse centers needed and the Detroit area's racial polarization geographically indicate that in reality some centers may have a majority-black or majority-white racial composition. If deemed appropriate in the data analysis, racial and ethnic differences might be considered in analyzing parental childrearing belief systems.

Responses from one-fourth of the parents associated with each center type will be included in the study as well as all full-time employees who have direct responsibility for children (hence excluding cooks, service staff, bookkeepers but including directors, child care professionals and aides). The parents will be selected randomly from center-provided records and contacted directly by the Project staff; centers will play no role in securing parent respondents. The study will include only one parent per family, and the determination of which parent will be made by asking for the parent who has the most contact with the child care center. Because our society places the bulk of responsibility for childrearing in the hands of the mother, it is assumed that most of the parent respondents in this study will be women. It is anticipated that approximately 120 parents will take part in the study, although the selection of the parent population by center size makes an actual count difficult to obtain before center selection is made. Because the study controls the size of the participating centers (30 to 60 children), the maximum number of possible parent respondents is no more than 180 and perhaps less (two or more children enrolled

from the same family).

Research Areas.

The Project's research study is designed to examine parent-caregiver relationships within four general areas: (a) childrearing belief systems; (b) parent and caregiver attitudes toward one another; (c) communication channels, content, frequency and setting; and (d) center policies and practices toward parents.

Within the first area, the study seeks data from parents and caregivers with respect to their childrearing attitudes by asking respondents to indicate their child-rearing behavior preferences. The study also asks respondents to indicate their preference for each other's behavior (parents' preferences for caregivers' behavior, caregivers' preferences for parents' behavior) in handling a childrearing situation. These data should show the degree to which parents and caregivers share similar childrearing attitudes, and indicate stated childrearing role expectations which, in the case of parents' preferences for caregivers, might have implications for parental assessment of day care programs.

The second area -- parent and caregiver attitudes toward one another -- encompasses parent and caregiver attitudes and perceptions in five different subareas. The subareas focus on attitudinal factors that potentially influence the parent-caregiver relationship and communication flow. They are:

Parent attitudes	Caregiver attitudes
general trust of caregiver (belief that caregiver is competent)	general trust of parent (belief that parent is competent parent)

Parent attitudes	Caregiver attitudes
desire and willingness to share information about child and family circumstances with caregivers	desire and willingness to share information about child and center activities with parents
receptivity to and interest in caregiver reports about child and center	receptivity to and interest in parental reports about child and family circumstances
perceptions of caregiver interest in and concern for parent and parent-child relationship	perceptions of parental interest in and concern for child and caregiver activities at center
perception of caregiver willingness to share information about child and center with parent	perception of parental willingness to share information about child and family with caregiver

These data should help to identify critical attitudinal areas that must be addressed in the Demonstration Component of the Project. Data from this area of the study also should provide insight into the complexities and interpersonal dynamics of multiple caregiving in our society.

The third area, which focuses on communication, is designed to determine communication channels among parents and caregivers, the content of communication, frequency of communication, and the setting in which two-way communication takes place. This information should be helpful in characterizing relationship types and developing day care practices that deal with parent-caregiver interaction.

The fourth area focuses on the day care center, and seeks data relative to centers' policies and practices toward parents. What is sought here is an initial indication of the degree to which center personnel are sensitive to parents and the parent-child relationship.

Methodology.

The study will utilize several research methods to gather the different types of desired data. The bulk of the information will be obtained in the context of individual interview sessions with parents and caregivers.

In this preliminary study no observations of behavior are to be made. It should be noted that the gathering of parent-caregiver communication and center practices data is more simplistic than should be pursued in subsequent studies. The intent of this initial study is to obtain an elementary measure of behavior variables in relation to the multiple variables that potentially affect the interactions of parents and caregivers.

The interview schedule developed for this study may be treated as a four-part instrument, with each section corresponding to one of the research areas discussed above. The first section is designed to obtain information from parents and caregivers about their attitudes toward teaching and managing a young child. The instrument to be used here is a modification of an interview schedule developed by Johnson, Sigel and Koester (1975) at the Educational Testing Service, Princeton. Respondents are given hypothetical situation items that reflect typical teaching or child management situations. Respondents are asked to rank order alternative solutions to the situation, with each solution representing a teaching strategy or influencing technique (Sigel, 1960). This aspect of the research study is a collaborative endeavor with Sigel and Johnson in that instrument refinement is a cooperative effort and relevant data are to be shared with the ETS researchers.

The second part of the interview schedule seeks parent and caregiver attitudes

toward each other in the areas enumerated earlier. These data are to be obtained by means of Likert-type summative attitude scales which request respondents to agree or disagree with a statement on a six-point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree (no neutral positions allowed). Ten attitude scales have been developed, each reflecting one of the subareas outlined previously and consisting of a cluster of highly correlated items that represent distinct attitudes or evaluative judgments related to parents or caregivers. Item content is based on theoretical concepts drawn from the literature, experiential input of selected caregivers and parents, and findings of the Emlen, Donoghue and LaForge (1971) study. The scales were developed independently for parents and caregivers to reflect differing role concerns, although parallelism among the scales exists. A respondent confidence rating is part of this section of the interview schedule.

The third section of the interview schedule asks direct questions about parent and caregiver communication in an attempt to determine communication channels (i.e. face-to-face, telephone, written messages, child as messenger, information gained through third party), frequency and content of communication (i.e., "public" institutional messages, family life circumstances, individual child, messages irrelevant to child, family or center), and the setting in which two-way interaction takes place (i.e., home visit, conference sessions, parents' meeting, daily child entrance and exit). The study also will ask parents to identify who in the center (director, caregiver professional, aide) does the bulk of communicating with parents.

A fourth part of the interview schedule is designed for the research area focusing

on center practices and policies toward parents. This section will be administered to center directors only, and will ask questions aimed at determining the degree to which the center attempts to communicate with parents (i.e. Are parent meetings held? How often?) and is sensitive to the parent-child relationship (i.e. Are parents allowed and encouraged to remain in the center the first day a child attends?). Some of the data related to this research area may be gathered via observation (i.e. Are parent-oriented bulletin boards present?).

Data are to be collected by trained inverviewers who will meet with parents individually in their home settings. Caregivers are to be interviewed individually at the day care center if the environment is conducive to an interview session. If distractions are present, the interview will be conducted at the Merrill-Palmer Institute. Printed forms will be used for the interview, and reading and language translation assistance will be provided where necessary. The interview schedule will be pretested on a group of parents and caregivers representative of the sample to be included in the study. Data are to be collected in two one-month periods during a five-month period, and seasonal variations are to be controlled by interviewing representative numbers of parents and caregivers from each day care type within the same short time period.

Data Analysis.

The data analysis is to be carried out in several areas utilizing the statistical methods of correlations, multiple correlations, factor analysis and analysis of variance. The desired end-products of the data analysis are (a) a determination of

the nature of parent-caregiver relationships in day care settings and (b) an identification of variables that appear to have a significant influence on parent-caregiver relationships. Specifically, the analysis will examine the relationship of organizational, staff, parent and attitudinal variables to communication data, center practices toward parents, and parent-caregiver attitudes toward one another. These analyses should enable the development of hypotheses relative to cause-effect relationships.

Data analysis is to be carried out at several levels. One level will examine data within the context of day care center types (having concern for organizational variables) and another level will conduct an analysis of data with respect to staff and parent variables. A third area of analysis will examine attitudinal data as variables affecting parent-caregiver communication and center practices toward parents.

Center Context. An analysis of data within the context of center types will examine the relationship of center sponsorship, social network and parent income-education variables to parent-caregiver attitudes toward one another, communication data, center practices toward parents, and discrepancy/congruency in childrearing belief systems. The day care centers also may be distinguished by the center directors' role concept; these concepts will be analyzed in light of center practices toward parents, and parent-caregiver attitudes toward one another.

Another level of analysis will examine data irrespective of center characteristics, thus yielding an examination of parent, staff and attitudinal variables.

Staff and Parent Variables. Director and caregiver characteristics and role concepts will be analyzed in relation to attitudes toward parents, and in relation to communication data. Parents' income-education levels, and length of and previous experiences with day care will be assessed in relation to parent attitudes toward caregivers, and in relation to communication data. In addition, parent and caregiver data about childrearing belief systems will be analyzed to detect possible discrepancies between preferred childrearing behavior for self and for other.

Attitudinal Variables. Parent and caregiver attitudes toward one another will be rated overall (i.e. a negative attitude rating would include parent belief that caregivers not interested in parent) and then attitude ratings will be analyzed in relation to communication data to determine if there is a relationship between attitudes and self-reports of behaviors.

Attitudes related to childrearing belief systems will be examined within the context of center types (organizational variables). While it will not be possible in this study to determine if childrearing belief system discrepancies or congruencies affect parents' relationship with center personnel (this study may find discrepancies, but we cannot assume parents are aware of them), it will be possible to assess communication data (by center type) in relation to childrearing belief system discrepancy/congruency; correlations in this area might suggest a possible relationship and hence provide a foundation for further investigation.

III. Demonstration Component

The development of the Demonstration Component is to be guided by this overall question: How might a supportive relationship between home and child care center be established, maintained and nurtured?

This question and the Project's intended demonstration activities reflect the belief that a child's development is enhanced when close coordination and mutually supportive relationships exist between nonfamilial caregivers and parents. The Demonstration Component is concerned with ways to bring about this condition. Its goal is to develop and demonstrate practices that improve the intersection of family and child care center social systems through a focus on the communication of parents and caregivers. Supportive relationships between home and child care center can only come about through meaningful interpersonal dialogue between parents and caregivers about childrearing values and practices. It is within this framework that the Demonstration Component of the Parent-Caregiver Project has been conceptualized.

Intended Outcomes and Theoretical Workscope.

The main purpose of the Demonstration Component is to demonstrate day care practices that attempt to strengthen the relationship between families and day care centers. Desired are practices that contribute to a mutually supportive relationship between caregivers and parents. The intent is to demonstrate ways which enable parents and caregivers to be sensitive to and supportive of each other's role in a young child's life. The aim is to demonstrate varied practices in natural settings that may be replicated in similar child care settings, rather than to develop and

demonstrate replicable models or total programs.

The results of the research study outlined in the previous section are to serve as a foundation for the development and implementation of the demonstration center practices, and therefore it is difficult to set forth at this writing the specific activities to be undertaken. It is impossible to formulate a detailed process aimed at strengthening family-center relationships without knowing center practices, parent and caregiver attitudes toward one another, and the current level, content and frequency of communication. Nevertheless, several assumptions and decisions have been made about the nature of the activities associated with the Demonstration Component. Discussion of these follows.

First, an assumption underlying the design of the Demonstration Component is that caregivers are in a key position to influence the center's relationship with parents. While it is realized that parents must assume an active role in any practice aimed at improving the parent-caregiver relationship, caregivers are unique in that (a) they are more accessible than parents as a population group to work with in changing behaviors and attitudes, and (b) compared with a group of unorganized parents, caregivers can initiate more readily a change in their relationships with parents. Thus, the Project's focus is on caregivers.

Related to this assumption, an important intended outcome of the Project is the development, evaluation and dissemination of material on parent-caregiver relationships aimed at the pre- and in-service education of child care professionals. It is expected that, by monitoring and recording the process and evaluating the practices

to be undertaken in the Demonstration Component, significant knowledge may be gained that will be beneficial to child care professionals concerned with articulation between home and day care center. It is undetermined at this point what media form the material might take, but it is an intention to have the experiences of the Parent-Caregiver Project serve as a basis for the development of pre- and in-service education materials. The point here is that the Project's findings must not only be disseminated to appropriate professional audiences, but the data also must be used creatively as a learning resource for parents and child care practitioners.

A second assumption underlying the design of the Demonstration Component is that implementation of the demonstration practices probably will require a change in the attitudes of parents and caregivers, particularly among members of the latter group because of the Project's focus on caregivers. Unknown at this point, of course, is the degree to which attitudes must change if a supportive relationship between parents and caregivers is to be achieved.

The implicit assumption here is that a change in attitude(s) will lead to subsequent adjustments in behavior. This assumption has been questioned critically since LaPierre's (1934) landmark study and a number of other investigations found an uncertain link between attitude and behavior (Mann, 1959; Saeger and Gilbert, 1950). There are several studies by reinforcement theorists which demonstrate measured or implied attitude change leading to changes in behavior (Krasner, Ullman and Fisher, 1964; Hare, Hislop and Lattey, 1964). The matter is an empirical question, not to be debated at length in this document.

The mixed evidence surrounding attitude and behavior change suggests that researchers need to look closely at behavior itself and how situational determinants or individual differences may lead to behavior change (Fishbein, 1967). Festinger (1964) emphasizes the need to examine the relation of changed attitudes to the environmental or behavioral supports which stabilize or institutionalize change. He states that without consideration of these variables "the same factors that produce the initial opinion and behavior will continue to nullify the effect of the opinion change (p. 416)." Schein (1962) submits that there are two conditions for effective attitude-behavioral change: the weakening of the supports of old behavior or attitudes, and the strong and constant reinforcement of new attitudes and desired behavior.

Implications of the above attitude-behavior change data for the Demonstration Component led to a decision about implementation of the demonstrated practices. The Project has concern for the process through which the practices are conceived and implemented, and the nature of the setting in which the practices take place. No two day care centers are identical. While there may be common and dominant distinctions, each center has its own unique characteristics which must be taken into consideration when dealing with a topic as delicate as parent-caregiver relationships. The intent, then, is to demonstrate child care center practices within the context of specific center and parent characteristics; as much emphasis is given to the center setting and to the process of developing and implementing practices as is given to the practices themselves. It is important to underscore this approach since any review of the demonstration center practices should encompass a serious concern for the where and how of the situation.

A second decision affecting the Demonstration Component relates to the typ of parent-caregiver relationship that the demonstrated practices are to be desi to achieve. While there are a number of variables that must be dealt with in a sing the matter of parent-caregiver relationships, one significant factor is the availability constraint of parents. How can parents become involved in child c centers when the vast majority are working full time outside of the home and b coping with crises associated with daily living? A partial answer to this inquir rest with the type of relationship a parent has with a child care center. The P Caregiver Project has concern for the quality, not necessarily the quantity, of action between parent and caregiver. The Project places a high value on paren caregiver dialogue that gives attention to concerns and issues related to the ca and development of the child, and provides greater awareness and understandi the part of both caregiver and parent of respective childrearing practices and g Dialogue of this type of content does not necessarily come about through an inc in the amount of time parents and caregivers spend together. It must be initiat through creative approaches and a focus on common concerns. In short, the P values the process of two-way communication and messages that focus on the c and family and center life circumstances.

Process Strategy and Steps.

To accomplish the objectives of the Demonstration Component, the Project pursue several steps, draw upon research data, relevant literature and practic found in other child care arrangements, and utilize the combined efforts of sel

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is to be financially compensated through Project funds. Participating parents must have a child in a group child care center (preferably not one of the Project's demonstration centers), have interest in the topic of parent-caregiver relationships but preferably not a background of intensive involvement (volunteer or otherwise) in group child care, and work outside of the home on at least a part-time basis.

The working committee (caregivers, parents, Project staff) is to meet weekly at the Merrill-Palmer Institute. It will be charged with the responsibility of carrying out the bulk of activities associated with the Demonstration Component. There are three general steps that are to be pursued before the day care practices may be demonstrated: (a) the development of desired day care practices aimed at cultivating and sustaining supportive parent-caregiver relationships; (b) the development of a strategy for implementation of the practices; and (c) implementation of the practices. A related step, of course, is the evaluation of the implemented practices and this area is discussed in a subsequent section. Details of each step follow.

It is expected that the working committee will utilize a number of information sources to develop the desired center practices. These sources include the following: (a) practices of child care centers where there are apparent supportive parent-caregiver interaction; (b) selected literature and relevant research data (in addition to Project research data); (c) practices found in informal "family day care" arrangements (i.e. Emlen, et al. 1971); and (d) applicable aspects of public-sponsored day care experiences. The information from these varied sources is to be gathered within a national perspective by a Project assistant and collectively should provide an extensive

resource for the working committee.

The committee's work in developing the day care practices is to be guided by this question: In what ways might a supportive relationship between parents and caregivers be facilitated? In addition to the research materials outlined above, the working committee is to develop practices in light of the Project's research findings and with a concern for specific center characteristics. The committee should give in-depth attention to the interrelated variables in the day care setting that may influence directly or indirectly the relationship of parents and caregivers. Center characteristics such as ethnic and cultural norms, parent and caregiver attitudes toward one another, child care center goals and philosophy, and the geographic proximity of the center to the employment settings of working parents (or homes of nonworking parents) must be considered in developing parent-caregiver practices. The Project's research findings should provide some of this information and other desired data will need to be gathered through observation and interview methods.

It is anticipated that the caregivers, parents and Project staff members will bring to the working committee their own biases and perceptions of parents, caregivers and how the two should or should not relate. It is important that these biases and preconceived notions be expressed in an open and honest way at the outset of the group's on-going discussions so that the inherent values may be dealt with and, if inconsistent with the Project's research findings, examined in depth. This step is necessary if the working committee is to attempt to be objective in its work and

approach its assignment within the context of the above-mentioned resources and concerns rather than with the perspective of one center and one person's biases. Project staff are to closely monitor the committee's work, making particular note of attitudinal changes.

The second step deals with the development of a strategy for implementation of the desired day care practices. Here the committee should be concerned with matters surrounding these questions: What changes need to be made to implement the desired practices? What factors must be dealt with to implement the desired change? Who will be affected? How might effective change be realized? What type of a support system needs to be developed to sustain the desired practices? It is here that close attention must be given to the Project's research findings and to literature pertaining to attitude change. The committee should be creative in its ideas here. For instance, it may find itself developing a workshop for caregivers that is seen as an appropriate mechanism for instituting the desired changes. The committee might conclude from a review of the Project's research data and the attitude change literature that it would be beneficial to develop a workshop session that attempts to sensitize caregivers to the demands and lifestyles of working mothers.

The third step is the actual implementation of the desired day care practices. The committee should carefully take into consideration all of the factors identified in the first two steps; the process is to be closely monitored and recorded by Project staff. It is expected that the working committee will focus its energies on the three

center demonstration sites at this stage, meeting periodically to discuss the progress and obstacles encountered. The main responsibility for implementation of the practices in the three sites will rest with the caregiver who represents that center. The Project staff is to serve in a supportive role at this stage. It is important that the desired changes become "institutionalized" and not dependent upon the Project staff who ultimately will disappear from the scene.

Demonstration Component Evaluation.

The Demonstration Component is to include summative and formative evaluations. To evaluate the effectiveness of the demonstrated practices, the Project will measure parent and caregiver attitudes toward one another, and communication channels, content, frequency and setting. These are two of the research areas to be examined in the Project's Research Component; the same methodologies are to be employed in the evaluation.

Data comparisons are to be made in two ways. First, data gathered from the three demonstration centers (after implementation of desired practices) are to be compared with data obtained in the research study. However, if there are significant changes in the caregiver population (it is difficult to control changing parent populations) then it will be necessary to administer appropriate sections of the research instrument just prior to and shortly after the day care practices are implemented. Second, data gathered from the three demonstration centers are to be compared with data obtained from three similar randomly-selected non-demonstration centers.

Formative evaluation is to be an integral part of the Demonstration Component. The deliberations of the working committee and implementation of the day care practices are to be carefully monitored and recorded, giving specific attention to change processes, resistance factors, unique setting characteristics (i.e. ethnic values) that affect day care practices, and potential support systems for sustaining the demonstrated practices. Particular concern in the formative evaluation is to be made for the role of the caregiver in the implementation of the desired day care practices.

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